

Message Text

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TAGS: PDEV PINT CU

SUBJ: CUBAN OFFICIAL CRITICIZES AP AND HINTS THAT U.S. POLICY

REVIEW MAY BE UNDERWAY

1. TOWARD THE END OF CONVERSATION AUGUST 17 ON OTHER MATTERS, MINREX ACTING DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS CARLOS ZAMORA ASKED ME IF I HAD SEEN RESULTS OF RECENT ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL SHOWING MAJORITY OF AMERICAN PUBLIC NOW OPPOSED TO NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA BECAUSE OF AFRICA. HE EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT THERE COULD HAVE BEEN SUCH A MARKED CHANGE IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES AS MEASURED IN EARLIER POLLS. ZAMORA WENT ON TO SAY THAT AP HAS SHOWN ITSELF IN PAST TO BE PREJUDICED AGAINST CUBA AND TO SUGGEST THAT THE TIMING OF THE POLL (SO SOON AFTER THE SENATIONAL SHABA AFFAIR) AND PERHAPS EVEN ITS CONTENTS WERE MANIPULATED. HE CITED AS ILLUSTRATIVE ANOTHER RECENT STORY (WHICH I HAVE NOT SEEN) FROM AP REPRESENTATIVE IN MADRID RELATED I GATHERED TO CHARGE THAT CUBA HAS SUPPORTED PUERTO RICAN TERRORISTS. ZAMORA SAID THAT MADRID REP WAS IN CHARGE OF AP BUREAU IN CUBA WHEN IT WAS CLOSED, IMPLYING THAT HE IS STILL BITTER ABOUT CUBA.

2. I COMMENTED THAT WHILE I COULD NOT SPEAK FOR THE
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SPECIFIC TECHNICAL VALIDITY OF THE AP POLL IN QUESTION NOR THE ATTITUDES OF SOME AP PERSONNEL, I THOUGHT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE HAD BEEN A CONSIDERABLE ADVERSE REACTION TO THE EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR IN AFRICA IN THE U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESS AS WELL AS THE ADMINISTRATION. I NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN STRONG EVIDENCE OF THIS IN ALL THE MEDIA, AND MOST RECENTLY IN THE BARLETT AMENDMENT

IN THE SENATE. THEREFORE, I COMMENTED, NEITHER THE TIMING (SINCE IT WAS NEWSWORTHY) NOR THE CONTENT OF THE AP POLL WERE SURPRISING.

3. ZAMORA THEN ASKED ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BARTLETT AMENDMENT AND SAID HE HAD NOT SEEN THE FINAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE TEXT. I GAVE HIM THE GIST OF THE FINAL LANGUAGE (AND LATER SENT HIM A COPY), POINTING OUT THAT WHILE IT HAD BEEN SOFTENED IN RESPONSE TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S OPPOSITION, IT SURELY DID NOT ELIMINATE THE VERY REAL CONCERNS WHICH HAD PROMPTED THE ORIGINAL AMENDMENT AND WHICH COULD SURFACE MORE FORCEFULLY AGAIN IN THE FUTURE.

4. COMMENT: ZAMORA'S REMARKS ABOUT AP REFLECT THE COMMON CUBAN TENDENCY TO SEE A CONSPIRACY IN EVERYTHING. HIS COMMENTS ALSO SUGGEST THAT GOC MAY BE REVIEWING THE STATUS OF U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF CUBA'S STEPPED UP MOVE FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE THIRD WORLD, THE BARTLETT AMENDMENT, AND OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. THE STRONG ANTI-U.S. TONE OF FIDEL CASTRO'S SPEECH ON JULY 26, OF THE RECENT WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL IN HAVANA, AND OF FOREIGN MINISTER MALMIERCA'S SPEECH AT THE CONFERENCE ON RACISM IN GENEVA ON AUGUST 16 SUGGEST AGAIN THAT CUBA SEES LITTLE REAL PROSPECT OF MAJOR PROGRESS IN NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS AND IN ANY CASE IS NOT PREPARED TO SACRIFICE OTHER MAJOR POLICY OBJECTIVES

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TO ACHIEVE IT. ON THE OTHER HAND, BENEATH THIS VITRIOLIC RHETORIC USINT'S OWN WORKING LEVEL CONTACTS WITH GOC IN HAVANA CONTINUE TO BE BUSINESSLIKE AND SOMETIMES EVEN BETTER, GIVING NO SUGGESTION OF ANY MAJOR CHANGE IN CUBAN ACTIONS TOWARD U.S. THE CUBANS CONTINUE, FOR EXAMPLE, TO BE EXTREMELY COOPERATIVE AND EVEN SOLICITOUS IN WORKING OUT DETAILS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REPATRIATION OF THE FIRST GROUP OF DUAL NATIONALS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THEY SEEM THEREFORE TO BE EMBARKED ON A TWO-TIER POLICY OF RHETORICAL ABUSE ON POLICY MATTERS AND PRACTICAL COOPERATION ON SOME MATTERS AT THE WORKING LEVEL TO KEEP THEIR OPTIONS OPEN. A MAJOR TEST OF THIS POLICY IN AN AREA WHICH THEY KNOW IS OF VITAL CONCERN TO US WILL COME SHORTLY IN THE COMMITTEE OF 24 DEBATE ON PUERTO RICO.

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